

**INTERNAL
ARRANGEMENTS
ADOPTED AT THE
ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND,
GLASGOW**

1835



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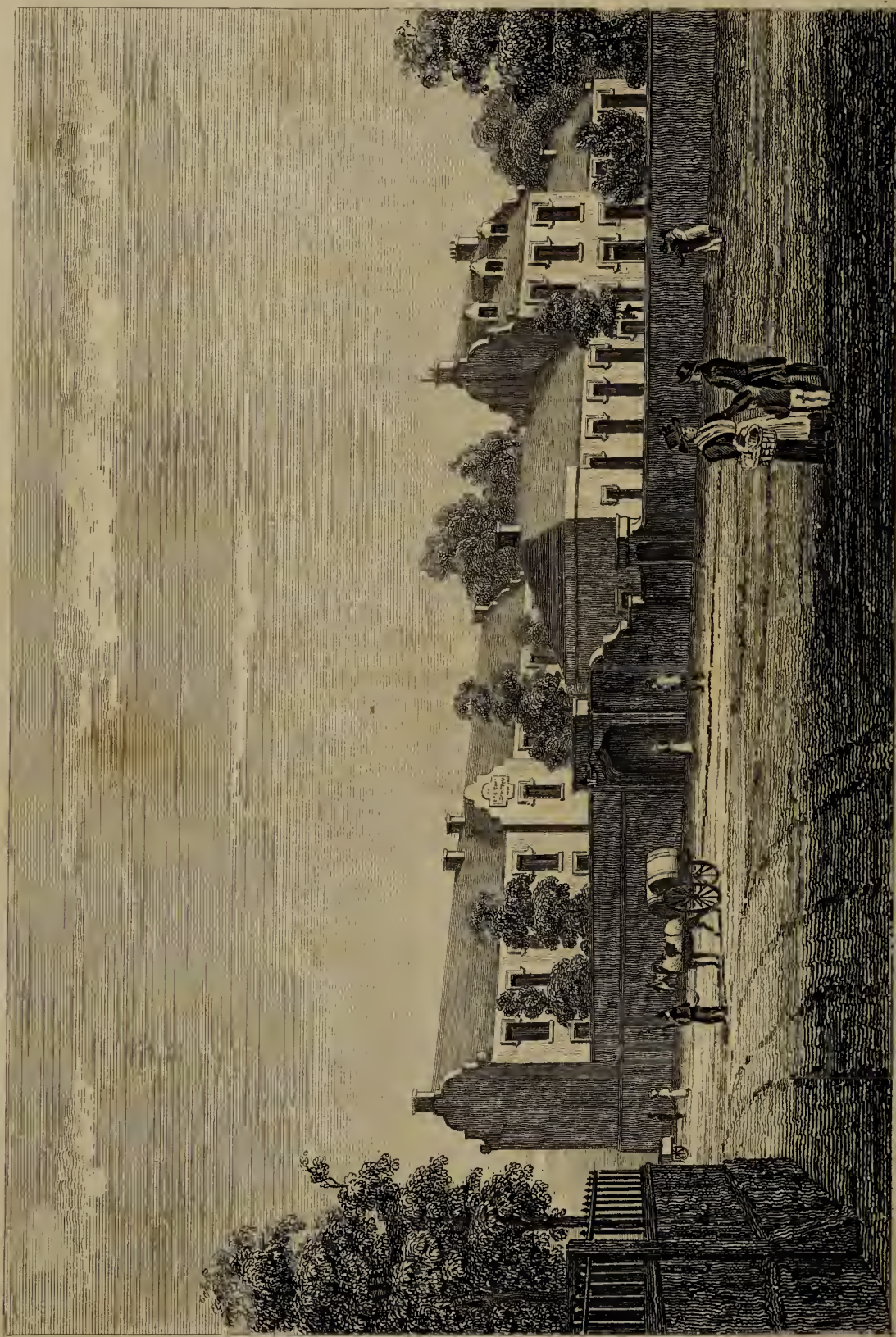
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GLASGOW ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND.

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STATEMENTS
OF THE
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT,
AND
INTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS,
ADOPTED AT THE
ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND,
GLASGOW.

WITH A SHORT ACCOUNT OF ITS FOUNDER AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS
APPLICABLE TO SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS.

JANUARY, MDCCCXXXV.

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TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE GLASGOW ASYLUM
FOR THE BLIND.

GENTLEMEN,

Having had numerous applications from different places in England, Scotland, and Ireland, for statements of the manner in which our Asylum is managed; and finding it impossible to give a proper view of its system in the short compass of a letter, I have endeavoured, with all brevity, to draw up the following account of the Education and Employment it affords, and of its Internal Arrangements. Should this attempt merit your approbation, and prove in any way beneficial to similar Institutions, the labour will be more than compensated to

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedt. servant,

JOHN ALSTON.

Glasgow, 5th January, 1835.

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EDUCATION OF THE BLIND.

It seems strange that there should exist a doubt in the mind of any one of the expediency of educating the blind; or, that it should be supposed enough has been done for them, when their corporeal wants have been supplied. They are rational and immortal beings, and capable of all the enjoyments which others feel from the cultivation of their moral and intellectual powers. It therefore becomes not only a reasonable but an incumbent duty to employ every means for the communication of general knowledge, and the cultivation of the moral and intellectual faculties of the unfortunates deprived of sight.

Should it be objected to that they are incapable of receiving instruction through the same means by which it is communicated to others, the objection only proves the necessity of endeavouring to devise such methods of conveying instruction as may be best suited to their particular circumstances.

For this object, various are the methods that have been proposed for instructing the blind in different countries, more particularly in France, by means of letters in relieve.

Mr. Gall, Edinburgh, has constructed an Alphabet on the French plan, and after great labour has published the Gospel of St. John.

At Philadelphia, America, the Gospel of St. Mark has been published; while others are still making trial of various forms to bring this desirable object to a completion.

Mr. Gall is entitled to our best acknowledgments for his perseverance in bringing to a conclusion his laborious undertaking; but it is doubtful whether his benevolent intention is to be permanently realized. The blind children acquire the alphabet, but the letters soon disappear with the using.

The letters of the Philadelphia publication are those of the English Alphabet in relieve, executed in a very superior style; but from the smallness of the letters, it is to be feared that this also may not accomplish the object so much desired.

But, from these beginnings, it is to be hoped the day is not far distant when some method may yet be discovered, of a permanent character, which shall not only communicate to the blind the wonderful things of God, but enable them to correspond with others.

Messrs. Milne and M'Beath, young men, both blind, in the Asylum, Edinburgh, invented an alphabet on twine, with which they were successful in communicating instruction to their blind companions. This latter system has been adopted in the Glasgow Asylum with considerable advantage; so much so that

children of eight years of age can read the Gospel of St. Mark, and other passages of Scripture with considerable facility. It is so simple, that when strangers visit the Institution, one of the blind is told to make in twine the letters of the name of the visitant, when another immediately reads it.

Some of the inmates who were instructed in this mode of communication, after leaving the Asylum and residing in the country, have corresponded on twine both with the seeing and the blind. (For description, see Lithographic Sketch.)

An important part of the education acquired at the Asylum, Glasgow, is communicated by oral instruction. After the pupils have acquired a knowledge of the alphabet, they are taught spelling; and as they have it not in their power to refer to books at their pleasure, great care and attention is necessary that they may spell correctly. Having acquired a tolerably correct knowledge of Orthography, they proceed to the study of Etymology; at this stage of their education, the derivation of words, and their relation to each other, are particularly explained. Thus they not only acquire a correct notion of the meaning of the words, but their minds are excited to greater diligence in the prosecution of their farther studies.

Instruction in history and other branches of general knowledge, are communicated sometimes in the form of lecture, at other times by way of dialogue, and frequently by catechetical examinations. By this system of tuition, the memory and the understanding, as well as the sense of feeling, become the channels through which instruction is conveyed.

The following statement of the progress in educa-

tion made by the inmates of the Asylum, appeared in a Glasgow Newspaper, descriptive of the public examination, October, 1833.

“ After prayer, the members of the Asylum sang an anthem with fine effect ; and one of the teachers, himself blind, proceeded to examine the younger pupils in orthography ; which was succeeded by questions from the Shorter Catechism, branching into explanatory questions, illustrative of their knowledge of what they had so faithfully stored in their minds. This was followed by a recital of the third chapter of St. Mark’s Gospel, acquired by their own reading, by means of their curiously constructed twine substitute for print, specimens of which were produced, which the treasurer remarked they could peruse with the same fluency with which any person in the room would read in their own manner—an observation fully borne out by subsequent examples. Their manner of reading and writing on twine was next exhibited, and several intricate questions in arithmetic were solved with a promptness and dexterity truly astonishing. The pupils were afterwards examined in geography, grammar, and Roman history. Throughout every department of instruction, they exhibited the most marked proofs of attention, industry, and intelligence ; and such as would reflect credit on any seminary of young people of the same years, who struggle under no such disadvantage. One of the most interesting parts of the exhibition was the method of communication between the members of the Asylum and two of the pupils of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Several questions, on subjects of a familiar nature, were written on a slate by different gentlemen in the

room, and put by a deaf and dumb boy to a blind boy, who audibly repeated and answered them to the audience. The following questions were put by a deaf and dumb girl, and answered by a blind boy:—

Q. By what do we get a knowledge of surrounding objects?—A. By the organs of sense, which are five

in number: the nostrils, the organs of smell; the tongue and palate, of taste; the ears, of hearing; the eyes, of sight; the hands, of touch.—Q. What are the

organs of sense often called?—A. These senses are often called the *external* senses; while knowing and reflecting have sometimes been called the *internal* senses.—Q. What are the objects of smell, touch,

and hearing?—The object of smell is odour, which is either agreeable or disagreeable; the objects of touch are all objects around us; the object of hearing is sound, which is either loud or low, musical or harsh.

—Q. What is music? &c. &c.—Q. Were you born deaf?—A. Yes; and one of my sisters, now at school.

After a few other promiscuous questions, Mr. Leslie, one of the blind teachers, put several questions to the blind boy regarding objects of sight, who answered by having recourse to the vision of his deaf and dumb companion. He then desired the boy to ask the little deaf and dumb girl, How did you lose your hearing? to which she, unassisted, replied in writing, “I lost my hearing from measles and fever when I was eight months old, and my mother lost her sight lately. I was very sorry for this affliction. If she spoke to me, I could not hear her voice; and when I wrote to her, she could not see. I am very glad now that I can converse with her by the sense of touch, as I have been doing with the blind boy.” A thrill of sympathy, followed by a murmur of applause from every heart in

the room, succeeded this artless and affecting little narrative of domestic affliction, which the triumph of art had done so much to alleviate. One of the boys then recited a few appropriate stanzas by Cibber; and two of his young compeers closed the whole, by playing several airs very sweetly on the accordean and flageolet; one of whom was rewarded by the present of a flute, with which the poor little fellow was led to his seat, in great glee."

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Mr. John Leslie, the teacher, who is blind, regularly instructs the children in the principles of religion. His own mind is well stored with the contents of the Bible, and he has been diligent in communicating his information to those under his charge. He gives regular courses of lectures on Sacred History, adapted to their capacities, taking notice of the different events therein recorded; illustrating them as regards nations, as well as individuals, and setting before his pupils the inestimable superiority of virtue and religion over immorality and vice.

The Very Rev. Principal Macfarlan has paid great attention, since the opening of the Asylum, to the spiritual interest of the inmates, by attending on them every Saturday; when the questions put by him, and the answers received, generally prove to his satisfaction the intelligence and diligence of the teacher, as well as that of his pupils.

Family worship is performed morning and evening, the superintendent reading out the line in the singing of the psalm; reading a chapter in the morning from the Old Testament, and in the evening one from the New. The teacher, who acts as the chaplain,

offers up the prayer which concludes the exercises for the day.

SABBATH DAY EXERCISES.

On the Sabbath, after breakfast, and before the inmates prepare for church, they are assembled in the school-room, when the matron reads a chapter from the Old Testament, and each boy and girl repeats a psalm or hymn. Afterwards they are attended to church; the boys by the superintendent, and the girls by the matron. In the evening, they are divided into small classes of three or four, each of which is taken charge of by one of the scholars farther advanced. A task is assigned to each class, and the monitor, having previously acquired it, teaches them to repeat it.

It is most encouraging to perceive with what ease the pupils acquire the task assigned them. They will repeat six, eight, and twelve verses with great correctness. Within these few months, a boy from the country, about nine years of age, was admitted. One about his own age, who had been sometime in the institution before him, was directed to instruct him in the Shorter Catechism; in the course of one week he acquired the whole, which he repeated almost without an error.

Those who have attained the art of reading, compose another class, and learn their task at the same time. At the hour fixed, they all assemble in the school-room before the matron, and repeat the task which they have learned; afterwards the matron reads a chapter from the New Testament, which closes the exercises for the day. At 8 o'clock, they retire to bed; each is taught a prayer and enjoined to repeat it every morning and evening.

ESTABLISHMENT AND EMPLOYMENT.

MALE DEPARTMENT.

THE SUPERINTENDENT.

The superintendent, who resides in a house attached to the Asylum, takes charge of the Male Department, together with the general management of the work. From the increased number of the inmates, he is allowed an assistant. He purchases the different articles for the manufactures; keeps an account of the work performed by each workman, from which a statement of their earnings is made; pays them their wages, every Saturday; and gives his assistance generally, wherever it is required.

WORK BY THE MALE ADULTS.

The male adults are employed in the weaving of sacking cloth; making of baskets of various kinds; spinning of twine; making and repairing of mattresses, door mats, hearth rugs, door and table rugs, with fringed rugs for parlour doors.

The wages are regulated in this department by the amount of work performed. They are allowed the same rate that other workmen have for the same kinds of work. It being ascertained that a man can make five or six shillings per week, he receives that as his weekly wages. At the end of every four weeks, a statement of his earnings is made up from the work-book, and whatever he has earned over that sum is paid him; and as a reward to industry, he receives one shilling per week of premium; but if

the weekly amount be not kept up, or the work be bad, there is no premium.

Ever since this regulation has been adopted, a marked improvement has taken place, both in the quantity and quality of the work produced. At the monthly settlement, the over-earnings which some of them had to receive, have amounted to six, ten, and even twelve shillings. It is the practice also in this Institution, that as soon as a person has acquired a proficiency in one trade, he is instructed in another ; so that if one should make small remuneration, he can betake himself to the other. It is, therefore, not uncommon, that the same person is at different times employed in two or three departments.

The over-earnings, with the premiums paid last year, 1834, amount to £35 : 17s. The delight exhibited by the blind workmen and families, when they return with the fruits of their labour, may be easily conceived. A spirit of industry is not only excited and kept up, (very different indeed from their former habits,) but an opportunity afforded of enjoying all those blessings resulting from the endearing relations of home, which they never could enjoy, were they (as is the case in some institutions) maintained within the establishment.

BOYS.

Boys from ten to sixteen years of age reside in the establishment ; and during the time they are not attending their classes, (sufficient time for recreation being allowed,) they are employed in working nets for wall trees, sewing up sacks, and such other work as they are found capable of doing, till their education

is finished, and they have acquired strength sufficient to be put to regular trades in the Asylum.

FEMALE DEPARTMENT.

MATRON.

The matron is allowed an assistant; both reside in the house, and have the charge of the domestic arrangements of the institution, superintending the education of the female department, providing the articles necessary for the different branches of female work, provisions for the house, and other matters connected therewith. They also conduct the sales.

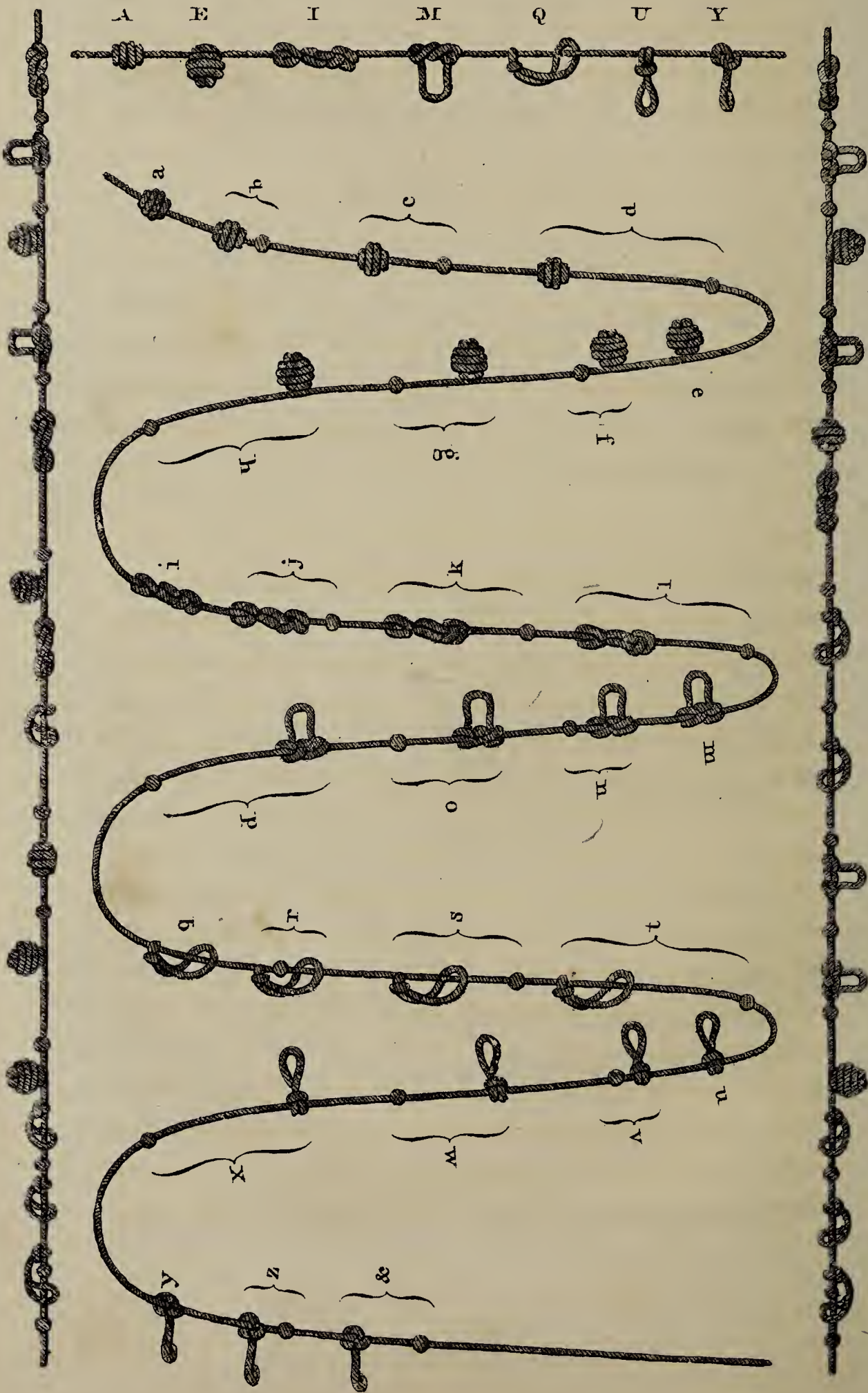
WORK BY THE FEMALE ADULTS.

Females are admitted into the Institution above 18 years of age as day workers. They come in at 10 o'clock, and remain till the worship is over in the evening. They are employed in sewing, knitting, netting, spinning, and winding of pirns for the weavers. They receive their dinner in the Asylum, and are allowed regular weekly wages.

Their apartments are separated from those of the males, and no intercourse whatever is permitted. At worship, they sit in a part of the chapel by themselves. It is found advantageous to have an elderly woman, who has sight, to take charge and work along with them, as they are in apartments separate from the children.

GIRLS.

The girls, like the boys, reside in the house; and



in addition to their general education, are instructed in knitting silk purses, stockings, and caps. From the neat manner in which these are executed, they command a ready sale ; they also assist in the household work.

TEACHING APPARATUS.

I. THE STRING ALPHABET

Is formed by so knotting a cord, that the protuberances made upon it may be qualified, by their shape, size, and situation, for signifying the elements of language. The letters of this alphabet are distributed into seven classes, which are distinguished by certain knots, or other marks ; each class comprehends four letters, except the last, which comprehends but two. The first, or A class, is distinguished by a large round knot ; the second, or E class, by a knot projecting from the line ; the third, or I class, by the series of links vulgarly called the “ drummer’s plait” ; the fourth, or M class, by a simple noose ; the fifth, or Q class, by a noose with a line drawn through it ; the sixth, or U class, by a noose with a net-knot cast on it ; and the seventh, or Y class, by a twisted noose. The first letter of each class is denoted by the simple characteristic of its respective class ; the second by the characteristic, and a common knot close to it ; the third by the characteristic, and a common knot half an inch from it ; and the fourth by the characteristic, and a common knot an inch from it. Thus, A is simply a large round knot ; B is a large round knot with a common knot close to it ; C is a large round knot, with a common knot half an inch from

it; and D is a large round knot, with a common knot an inch from it, and so on. The alphabet above described is found by experience to answer completely the purpose for which it was invented. In this alphabet, the greater part of the Gospel of Mark, and the 119th Psalm, and other passages of Scripture and historical works, have been executed. The String is wound round a horizontally-revolving frame, and passes from the reader as he proceeds.

II. THE ARITHMETIC BOARD

Has been so improved at this Asylum, that the 10 numerals are represented by one characteristic pin, (while in similar institutions two are used,) according as it is placed. It is simply a pentagon, with a projection at one end on an angle, and at the other end on a side. Being placed in the board, with a corner projection to the left hand upper corner of the hole, it represents 1; proceeding to the right hand upper corner, it is 3; the next corner in succession is 5; the next 7, and the last 9. In like manner the side projection, by being turned to the sides of the hole progressively, give 2, 4, 6, 8, 0. The size of the board used at the Asylum is 16 by 12 inches, and contains above 400 holes, kept about a quarter of an inch separate. The size of the pentagon, and a drawing of the pin, showing the projections on the side and angle, are given along with the board.

III. THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE.

This globe, which is made of oak, is about nine and a half feet in circumference, and weighs 147 lbs. The weight of the brass meridian is 57 lbs., and of

Fig. 1.

A pin showing the projection
on the angle.

A pin showing the projection
on the side.



The Terrestrial Globe.

Fig. II.



the wooden horizon and supports 48 lbs., making in all $2\frac{1}{4}$ cwt. Notwithstanding its great weight, the whole is so nicely constructed as to render it easy, comparatively speaking, to give the poles any elevation which may be required with regard to the horizon. The water is made smooth, and the land is distinguished from it by being slightly elevated, and its surface rendered rough by a coating of fine sand, painted in oil of various colours, in order to distinguish to the eye the political divisions. These divisions are also surrounded by a slight prominence, for the purpose of enabling those for whom the globe is more particularly intended to grope their way. Rivers are denoted by smooth and slightly raised sinuous lines, traversing the rough land in their proper directions; mountains by a series of elevations indicating the position of the range; and towns by a small brass knob. The Equator is divided into 360° . The point where the first meridian crosses it is marked by a round knob. A different mark is placed at every 10° , and the intermediate degrees are also distinguished in an appropriate manner. An hour-circle is fixed at the North Pole; and an Analemma, of an ingenious construction, showing the sun's declination, stretches equally on each side of the Equator. In short, this globe has all the usual appendages of such pieces of apparatus, only so modified as to enable the blind to solve Geographical Problems, and *feel* their way upon it, with as much precision as those who have eyes and can *see* their way upon globes of the usual construction.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE implements employed for the different kinds of work that are carried on by the inmates of the Glasgow Asylum are of the strongest materials, as those who use them labour under difficulties that other workmen have not to contend with, and thereby the machines are more liable to be broken. The raw materials for manufactures are all of the best kind, otherwise the work could not be so well executed. In spinning twine, not only is it necessary to have a person who has sight to superintend the spinners, and ball the twine, and prepare the flax, but the wheel boys should be active in assisting. In the weaving, and other departments of labour pursued, it is necessary to have, in an Institution of this kind, persons of good acquirements in various kinds of work, and of considerable ingenuity; but their number must be regulated by the number of the inmates.

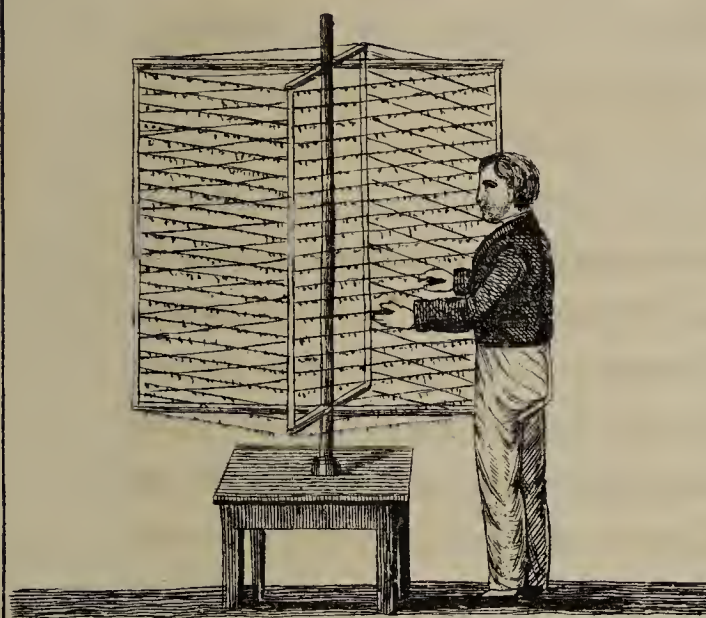
With respect to the kinds of work most suitable for such an institution, circumstances of locality and experience alone can determine; but in general, making of sacking cloth, making baskets, spinning of twine, making of mattresses and door mats, are those which can be taught to advantage.

The females can be instructed in many useful branches of industry, such as knitting, spinning, netting, &c., as well as household work; in proof of which it may be stated, that one of the girls, after having acquired the usual branches of education

N^o.3.

Trades carried on in THE GLASGOW ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND

Fig. I.



READING FRAME

Fig. II.



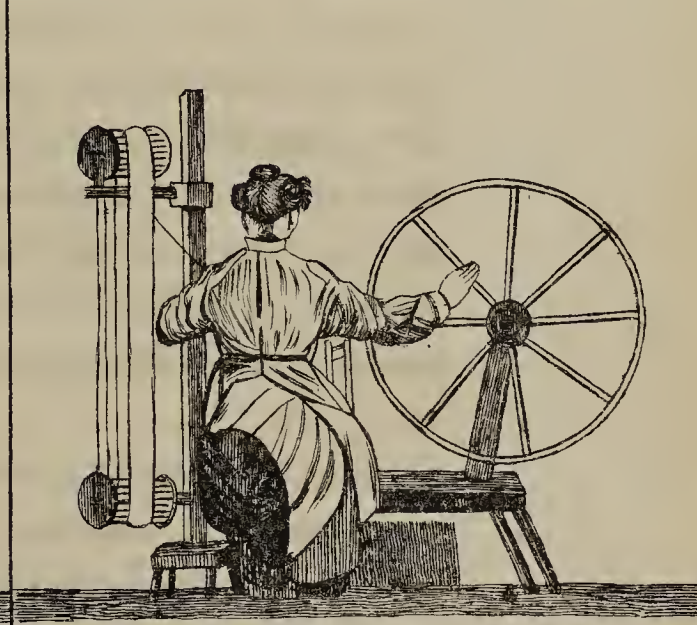
NET MAKING

Fig. III.



SEWING-

Fig. IV.



WINDING-

Fig. V.



KNITTING

Fig. VI.



MATTRESS MAKING

taught, has been engaged as one of the domestic servants in the Asylum, and performs her work to the entire satisfaction of the matron.

To several of the boys, who were admitted into this institution, their training has been of most important benefit. After going through the usual course of education in writing, reading, English grammar, arithmetic, and geography, (generally attained in three or four years,) and being of sufficient strength, they were put to regular trades, and are already earning five and six shillings per week. This is noticed to exhibit the great advantage of admitting the young to such institutions early; they thereby acquire a proficiency in their trade, that those who are farther advanced in years never attain to.

Several of the blind men are employed in calling on the customers of the Asylum, in Glasgow and suburbs, to deliver and solicit orders. It is common for adults who reside in the distant parts of the city to come to their employment without a guide, and no accident has happened to any of them in going or returning.

In farther proof of their capability of walking without an assistant, a young boy, of fourteen years of age, whose parents resided six miles from Glasgow, was in the habit of visiting them. He was accustomed to leave the establishment without an attendant, traverse the whole length of the city, finding his way through the Calton, Bridgeton, along Rutherglen bridge, through that town, and to his father's house. This he did with as much correctness as if he had been in the full possession of vision.

That the inmates are sensible of the great benefits

derived by them, will be best shown by the following extract from an address, spoken by one of themselves to the managers, at a recent examination:—

“My Lord Provost, impressed as we are with a sense of the great obligations we lie under to the Directors of this Institution, we cannot refrain from giving this public expression of our gratitude. We are conscious that but for an Institution like this, the young amongst us must have remained ignorant of many branches of useful knowledge, which they have now an opportunity of acquiring; nor is it the least gratifying circumstance connected with their education, that while they have been pursuing their various studies, they have attained a degree of intelligence, and have acquired such a store of general information, as cannot fail to be useful to them in after life. Nor have the adults in the Institution less cause for gratitude; they, instead of passing their time in listless inactivity, have now acquired a habit of industry, which, while it makes their time pass more pleasantly, confers on them what one of our own Bards has called “the glorious privilege of being independent.” On this subject I speak from personal experience. Previous to my connexion with this Institution, my time hung heavy on my hands; but now it glides smoothly on in a pleasing alternation of employment and relaxation. For these inestimable favours, we return our best thanks to our benefactors.”

The advantages, however, arising from an institution of this kind accrue not only to its inmates, but to the community at large. There are, at this date, in the Asylum at Glasgow, forty-eight individuals enjoying comforts they could not have otherwise

Trades carried on in

N^o. 4. THE GLASGOW ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND

Fig. I.



FLAX DRESSING

Fig. II.



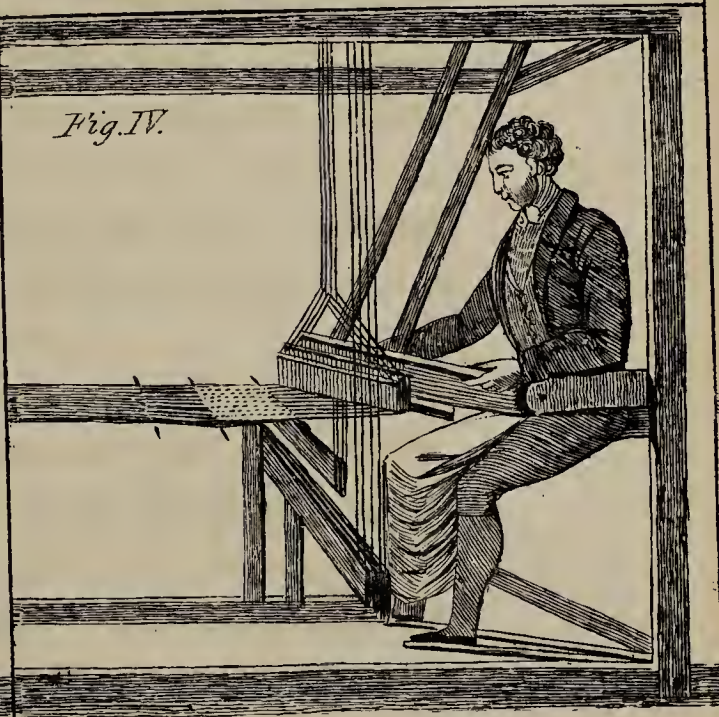
SACK PRINTING

Fig. III.



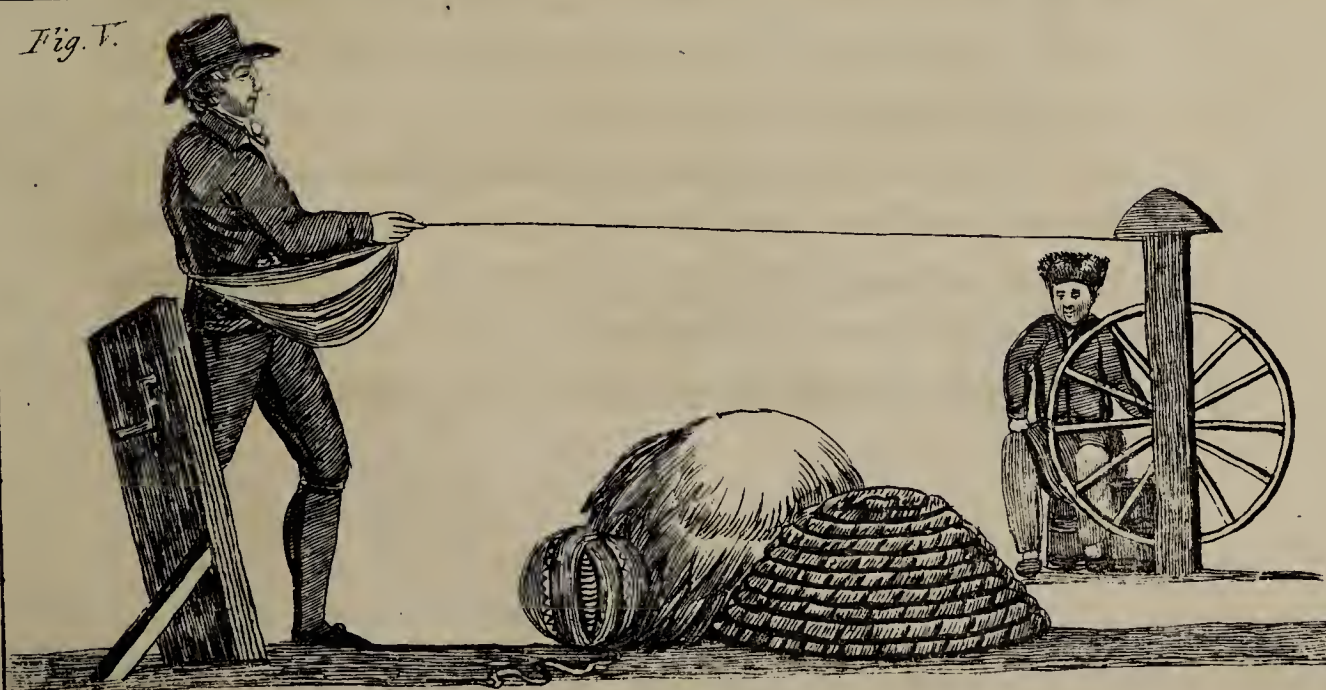
BASKET MAKING

Fig. IV.



WEAVING

Fig. V.



ROPE MAKING

obtained; many of them are married and heads of large families, and thus besides being comfortable themselves, all those connected with them, to the number of upwards of one hundred and ten persons, participate in the benefits.

John Leitch, Esq., of this city, was the benevolent founder of the Blind Asylum. He himself had suffered under a partial infirmity of sight, and bequeathed the sum of £5000 towards opening and maintaining the Institution.

Much as has already been done, a great deal more is capable of being done; and many persons have come forward, and many it is trusted will still do so, imbued with the spirit that actuated the founder. It still requires additional support, that it may extend its accommodation to many destitute persons, deprived of sight, and yet unprovided for in this district of Scotland.

Upwards of seventy-five blind persons have been admitted into the Asylum, since it was opened in January, 1828, who have been educated and employed in the manner already described.

Hitherto this Institution differs from all others of the same kind known to its managers. It solicits no annual subscriptions, but depends for its support entirely upon contributions and legacies of the pious and benevolent. The patronage of the public also does much in its behalf, by purchasing its manufactures.

By the constitution of the Asylum, a contributor of £10 is constituted a member for life; and a donation of £50 from an individual, or £100 from a parish, entitles either to recommend a child to the Asylum.

The table annexed exhibits the progress of the indus-

try of the inmates, and the amount of proceeds since its commencement. When experienced workmen leave the establishment, they are replaced by younger ones; the change in different kinds of work may also make a difference in the amount, and thus it may happen that there may be more labour and exertion on the part of the inmates, while the amount of sales may not be so large. The price of the materials, as well as the wages, are all included; the teachers, who are blind, have set wages, and when not teaching, they are working.

The different articles are made of the best materials, and sold at the same prices with others in the trade.

TABLE OF THE NUMBER OF BLIND PERSONS IN THE
ASYLUM, GLASGOW, SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT;
SPECIFYING THE NUMBER EACH YEAR, AND
PROCEEDS FOR WORK:—

DATE.	NUMBER FROM 9 YEARS AND UNDER 14.	NUMBER ABOVE 14 YEARS.	AMOUNT OF SALES.		
			£	s.	d.
1828	8	14	231	2	5
1829	10	18	642	14	0
1830	12	22	665	16	11
1831	14	28	887	11	5
1832	14*	28	1101	9	7
1833	16	29	1189	17	6
1834	18	30	1303	0	1

* Five were admitted and five left.

PARTICULARS OF THE SALES OF 1834, WITH THE
AMOUNT RECEIVED FOR EACH ARTICLE
MANUFACTURED.

Twine, . . .	£306	7	4
Baskets, . . .	269	7	0
Mattresses, . . .	187	18	7
Baked hair, . . .	78	10	9
Door mats, . . .	80	11	5
Door and hearth rugs,	37	0	6
Silk purses, . . .	23	4	0
Knitting, . . .	38	3	6
Sacks, . . .	259	0	10
Hair friction mits, . . .	7	5	6
Nets, . . .	12	4	4
Sundries, . . .	3	6	4

£1303 0 1
£1303 0 1

*added
This is correct
to m.*

The amount of wages paid this last year is ~~£560~~
16s. 10d. £547 - 14 - 10.

Number of inmates—12 Boys } From 9 to 14 years }
6 Girls } of age. } Blind.
30 Adults }
3 Wheel Boys, } Seeing.
2 Adults }

53 at the manufactory.

Salaries to Superintendent, Matron, Assistants,
Female Servants, and Secretary, total, ~~£126-5s.~~ £143 - 7s - 8

The public are respectfully requested to visit the
Institution between the hours of 11 and 4, Sunday
excepted.

